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light ... on a New World

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Light on life

WHAT A JOY it is to see the sun. Each new day brings that awakening which lifts our hearts and spirits as we see by its light the lovely world that God has created. God not only created the world but also gave us sight and the light of the sun allows us to appreciate His creation.

It is easy to take both light and sight for granted until they are taken away. Who would choose to be blind or to live in a dark world? Yet this is the case in the world today where men prefer darkness. As the apostle John explains:

'... this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'¹

Let us consider the creation of 'light' and how it is linked to 'life' by the Creator.

THE CREATION OF LIGHT

If we turn to the first few verses of Genesis we find that God created light on the first day.

'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.'²

¹John 3. 19 ²Genesis 1. 3, 4

There is a great depth of meaning in these verses. Not only does it tell us that God is the author and giver of light but that He separates light and darkness. Light is a characteristic of God.

'Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.'³

Just as we cannot look at the sun but only wonder at its power and its ability to show us the world, so we can only wonder at the power of Almighty God and His love for us that He is willing to show us something of Himself.

'...since what may be known about God is plain... For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.'⁴

When we read further in Paul's second letter to Corinth:

'For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'⁵

We can immediately see that the giving of light to the earth is much more than the creation of electro-magnetic radiation, but is intimately related to the work of Jesus Christ and so reveals even more to us about Almighty God.

Man has spent a lot of time trying to understand the radiation from the sun that is so important to this planet. The vast range of radiation from infra-red, that we feel as heat, through the visible region and on into the X-rays and gamma rays that we need instruments to detect, shows that God creates wonders that are beyond our understanding. Why does light always travel at the same speed regardless of the movement of the source or the observer? How does light travel through the vacuum of space? Is light made of waves or particles called photons? These are just a few of the problems that man has been unable to fathom. Truly we can echo the words:

'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!'⁶

THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH

Just as after years of study we have little understanding of electro-magnetic waves, so the light of the Truth that we find in the Bible is also of great depth and complexity and only a little of it rubs off as we study its pages. Such is the nature of the creation and the Creator.

When Moses had a brief contact with the angel of God's presence at Sinai, he

³I Timothy 6. 16 ⁴Romans 1. 19, 20 (NIV) ⁵II Corinthians 4. 6 ⁶Romans 11. 33

took home a little of God's wisdom in the Law and he took home a little of that reflected glory in that his face shone. But even that small amount of glory was too much for Israel and Moses had to cover his face with a veil.

This event of course (as all events in the Bible) has much more significance than just an inconvenience to Moses. It represented the fact that Israel were unable to see the purpose of the Law (as a schoolmaster) to bring them to a knowledge of God's salvation. A veil was put over it so that they should not see God's glory until He was ready to reveal it to them.

'We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.'⁷

Here is a perfect example of how God entwines natural and spiritual lessons in His word. The light of the Truth shines out of the Bible. Jesus was the 'Light of the World', who gives life to those who seek the light of the Truth. When he died on the cross the veil of the temple split in two to show that access to the mercy seat of God, in the Holy of Holies, was now freely available through Christ.

LIGHT AND LIFE

We are all familiar with the importance of sunlight in sustaining life on the earth. Plants need light. All the energy locked in the earth as coal or oil or gas comes originally from sunlight. We depend entirely on the sun to keep us warm, to feed us, to light our path. The sun is the source of life. It is no wonder that primitive men sometimes worship the sun—the creation instead of the Creator.

But God made things this way to show us His purpose in Christ. Jesus is the real light and source of life on the earth. The prophet Isaiah referring to Christ explained that although Jesus was sent initially to call the remnant of Israel back to God, he had an even greater work in calling the Gentiles.

'... It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.'⁸

That Isaiah was referring to Jesus Christ is evident from the words of Simeon who identified Jesus when he was brought into the temple:

'For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.'⁹

⁷II Corinthians 3. 13-16 (NIV) ⁸Isaiah 49. 6 ⁹Luke 2. 30-32

Just as the pillar of fire led Israel to safety in the darkness of the wilderness so the light of the Truth spoken by Jesus leads the whole world to salvation from death if they follow him.

Jesus recognised that that was his mission. As he said to the woman caught in adultery:

'... I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'¹⁰

Again the link between light and life is shown. This natural relationship that we see around us in the creation, with which we are so familiar, has been provided by God to teach the relationship between the light of the Truth and eternal life in Christ. It is the apostle John who draws out the subtlety of this relationship in his famous discourse at the beginning of his Gospel. In it he draws out the origins of light and life from God and the parallel between the Creation and the light brought by Christ that shines in the darkness of men's hearts to lead them to life. In each case the light came by the 'word' of God. In each case the light from God dispels the darkness which is in the world. Light and darkness are divided and this separation is an essential part of God's purpose.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Jesus took the idea of the light coming into the world further, referring to his followers also as light bearers.

'Ye are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'¹¹

So we too can reflect the glory of God in our lives, just like Moses did, but we can give this light of Truth to others and so lighten their lives also.

This theme comes out in many places in the New Testament. Paul especially, who saw the light of Jesus Christ in a spectacular physical way at his conversion, often refers to that even more spectacular light of Truth in his letters.

'For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light ... '¹²

'Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.'¹³

Paul takes the theme even further to the bursting forth of the dawn.

THE DAWN

Perhaps this is the most exciting aspect of the creation of light and God's purpose. God arranged things so that every day the light of the sun bursts anew on the world, changing darkness into light, night into day. We are told that Christ will

¹⁰John 8. 12 ¹¹Matthew 5. 14-16 ¹²Ephesians 5. 8 ¹³I Thessalonians 5. 5

soon return to rejuvenate the world and that he will come as a *thief in the night*. Paul tells us to watch and be ready for the dawn of Christ's return.

'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.'¹⁴

Then we will be ready when Christ returns to change the darkness of this world to the dawn of the 'day of the Lord'.

'For as the lightening, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.'¹⁵

This theme of the new day runs all the way through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. The prophet Malachi said:

'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.'¹⁶

The apostle John represents fellowship with God as dwelling in light, both in this present age and in the age to come:

'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.'¹⁷

'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light.'¹⁸

Of course this theme of dwelling in the light of God is eloquently described in the city of the new Jerusalem in the last chapter of the Bible.

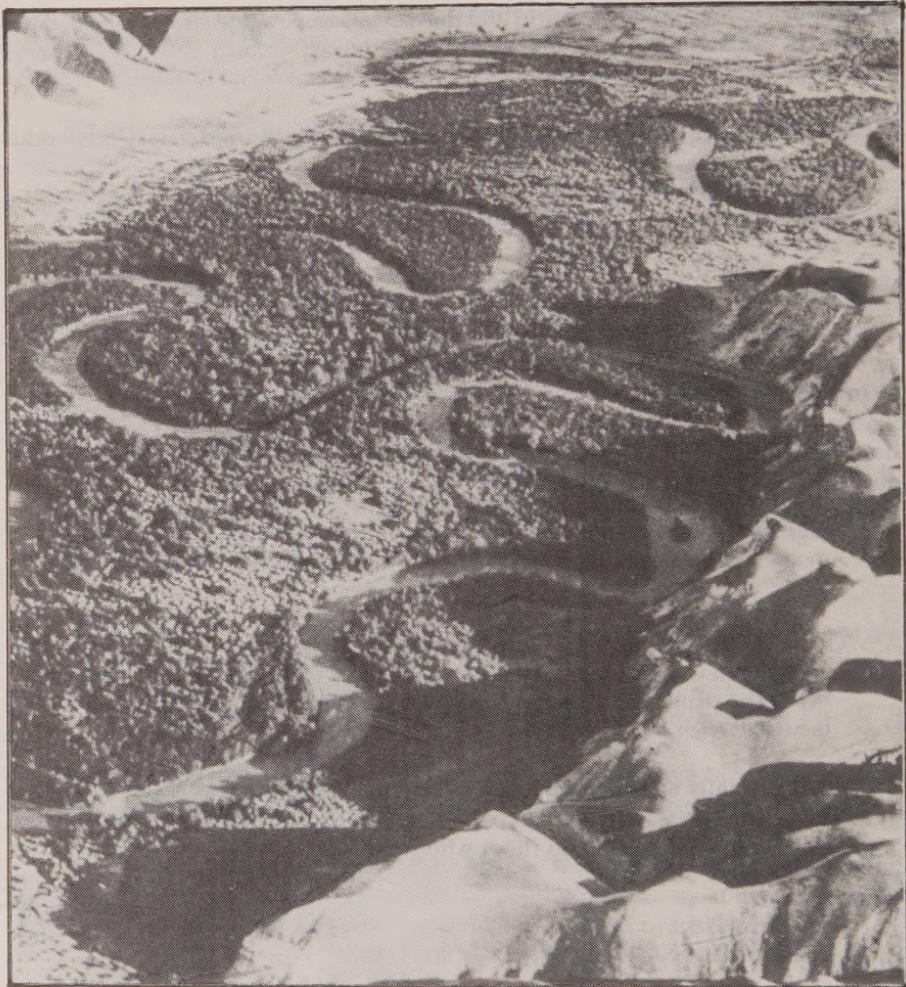
'And there shall be no night there; . . . for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.'¹⁹

So here finally we see emphatically stated the relationship between Light and Life. The lessons we learn from the creation lead us to the Light of the Word of God and the Eternal Life it offers to those who follow it.

R. Griffiths
Bexley

¹⁴I Thessalonians 5. 6 ¹⁵Luke 17. 24 ¹⁶Malachi 4. 2 ¹⁷I John 2. 10 ¹⁸Isaiah 60. 19

¹⁹Revelation 22. 5



THE RIVER JORDAN

Looking across to deep canyon of the Jordan Valley, westwards. The forestation of the floor of the valley, still as fertile today, was once the haunt of lions (Jer. 49. 19). It was in this river that John the Baptist baptised Jesus.

Water and life

TO STATE THAT water is essential for life is certainly to state the obvious. In normal circumstances we would not survive without water for more than a few days. Plants which form the start of many food chains die in the absence of water. The oxygen we breathe is produced by plant life on the land and in the sea—and again, water is needed.

This article is not however about the remarkable properties of water and the way in which it sustains life. It is about the way in which water is taken in the Bible as a symbolic, life giving necessity, and in particular, the way in which immersion in water by baptism is essential for the life which, in the Bible is described as a 'new life'. This, Jesus explains, is everlasting life in God's kingdom.

Jesus was once talking with a Samaritan woman beside a well. He said:

'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life'.¹

The water that Jesus gives is the knowledge and understanding of the kingdom of God. His life was devoted to teaching about this. This was the whole object of his ministry.

BAPTISM AS A SYMBOLIC ACT

Jesus, towards the end of his ministry on earth said to his disciples,
'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'²

And Matthew also records the following words of Jesus:

'Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'³

¹John 4. 13, 14 ²Mark 16. 15, 16 ³Matthew 28. 19

It may seem that baptism is a curious ritual to have to undergo. It may seem absurdly primitive and not in keeping with modern civilised societies. How, one might ask, can immersion in water have any relevance to salvation from everlasting death, which is what Jesus said in the verse cited above from the book of Mark.

The way of salvation is a plan which God initiated to run right through the ages, and there are many events recorded in the Bible which are symbolic in some way of part of this plan. Baptism itself is symbolic in this way, so we must not question why God requires baptism for salvation, but we must accept it as a symbolic act by which we show our humility and obedience to God.

THE SYMBOLOLOGY EXPLAINED

The symbology of the act is explained for us in the letter which the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans:

'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.'⁴

Baptism then is a symbolic burial. When we are baptized we associate ourselves with the death and burial of Jesus. When we come out from under the water we associate ourselves with the resurrection of Jesus.

There is also a secondary symbolic meaning of baptism.

Soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the apostle Peter was preaching and pricked the consciences of his listeners so that they asked, '*What must we do?*' Peter's answer to them was, '*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*'⁵

Again, in Paul's account of his conversion recorded in Acts he says that he was told '*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*'⁶

Baptism is thus referred to as a *washing away of sins*, and this figure is used a number of times in the New Testament. In Hebrews for example it is written '*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*'⁷

This washing away of sins is, of course, very closely associated with Christ's work on the cross, because it is by his death that it became possible for sins to be forgiven.

⁴Romans 6. 3-5 ⁵Acts 2. 38 ⁶Acts 22. 16 ⁷Hebrews 10. 22

Baptism then is a symbolic burial, and it is a symbolic washing away of sins. This symbology of baptism can be traced through from the first book of the Bible to the end. The symbology was established virtually from the beginning of creation. At the time of Jesus the symbols were made evident, and have been described to us in detail as we have just demonstrated. Since then, we might ask, has anything happened which might have changed this symbology? Of course the answer is quite obviously 'No'. So baptism is just as relevant today as it was in the first century AD when the first Christian converts were being made.

SOME EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

The New Testament book of Acts is the book which gives us the historical record of this time. And it is quite clear from this book that the disciples were obeying those words of Jesus to preach and to baptize, and that all who believed were indeed baptized.

Here are some examples, and there are others, all from the book of Acts.

1. Peter was once preaching on a day which in the Jewish calendar was known as the day of Pentecost. It is recorded that those who accepted Peter's message were baptized:
‘Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.’⁸
2. The reaction of those who heard Philip preaching was the same:
‘But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip.’⁹
3. Later on in this same chapter in Acts we read how Philip preached to an Ethiopian and later baptized him. The Ethiopian was reading from the prophet Isaiah, but did not understand the significance of what he was reading. It is quite clear from the context of the following quotation, that while Philip preached about Jesus, one of the things he must have taught about was the significance and importance of baptism, just as we are attempting in this article.
‘Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?’¹⁰
4. In the next chapter of Acts we see that the great apostle Paul was baptized as soon as he accepted the gospel. Paul's conversion was rather spectacular. It took Paul 3 days to change his life from one of commitment to persecution of

⁸Acts 2. 41 ⁹Acts 8. 12, 13 ¹⁰Acts 8. 35,36

- Christians, to one of commitment to following Christ. At the end of that 3-day period the first thing he did was to be baptized.¹¹
5. In chapter 16 of Acts, we are told of Paul himself, preaching the gospel. And when he preached what was the response? The people who heard him and believed were baptized. Here we read how a woman called Lydia heard Paul and was then baptized:

'And a certain woman named Lydia . . . heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized . . .'¹²

6. Later in this same chapter we read of a prison officer at Philippi who said to Paul and Silas,

'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

The passage then goes on to record how Paul taught him about Jesus, and then baptized him.¹³

WHAT BAPTISM INVOLVES

Let us now look a bit more closely at what baptism involves. The passages cited so far indicate clearly that baptism follows on from belief in the gospel. A prerequisite for belief in the gospel as taught by Jesus is a knowledge and understanding of the gospel. Clearly it is not possible to believe in something of which one has no knowledge.

Following the understanding and belief, the act of baptism itself involves the person being submerged under the water, and emerging to a new life.

There are three ways in which we know that the baptism taught by Jesus involved this act of immersion:

Firstly the word which is used in the original Greek of the Old Testament is a word which means the same as to dip or immerse and it was used when describing the work of a fabric dyer. Dyeing a piece of cloth clearly involves completely immersing it, so perhaps a more accurate rendering of this word baptize would be immerse. In fact the original Greek word is 'baptiso', and this word has become transferred into our language directly, rather than being translated. The main point to note however, is that originally in the Greek the word for immersion would not have been used if baptism had not been an act of immersion.

The second way in which we know that the baptism taught by Jesus involved immersion is that we know that baptism is symbolically a burial. We have

¹¹*Acts 9. 18*

¹²*Acts 16. 14, 15*

¹³*Acts 16. 30*

established that from the earlier reference to the letter to the Romans. Burial always involves a total covering, and therefore for this symbology to apply, baptism likewise must involve a total covering. Symbology in the Bible is extremely important, and so again we can be confident that all those who are recorded in those references in Acts cited above as being baptized, all of them underwent a total immersion in water as a symbolic association with the death of Christ.

The third way in which we know what the act of baptism involved is that there is one baptism described in some detail. It is one of the ones referred to above in Acts Chapter 8, about Philip baptising the Ethiopian. Here are the words again:

'They came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?' ... and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.'¹⁴

So we have demonstrated how Jesus commanded his disciples to preach, and to baptize those who believe, so that they might be saved. We have shown how baptism is symbolic of burial, and particularly burial associated with the death of Jesus, and that it is also a symbolic washing away of sins. And we have shown that baptism was the practice for all the believers in the earliest days of Christianity, and that nothing has happened to change that requirement.

Regarding the act of baptism itself we have demonstrated that there are four aspects:

1. Understanding the gospel message, followed by
2. Belief
3. A repentant and humble state of mind
4. The act of immersion itself

It is only after fulfilling each of these aspects that a person can claim to be a Christian. The words of Paul to the Galatians make this clear:

'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'¹⁵

The heirs of Abraham are the people to whom God's promise was that they would inherit the world for ever.

A Christian is one who has associated himself or herself with Christ in baptism. If you are baptized then you are *in Christ* and if you are *in Christ* then you are an heir to God's promises of salvation. It's a simple equation.

¹⁴Acts 8. 36-38 ¹⁵Galatians 3. 27-29

This simple truth has become widely distorted, and is widely ignored today. Nevertheless it is essential to recognise the need for baptism as the start of a life committed to Jesus and a life lived in the knowledge that he will return and reward those who are his, with everlasting life in his kingdom.

'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.'¹⁵

Barry Skinner
Redhill



THE UPPER REACHES OF THE RIVER JORDAN

'See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?'¹⁷

¹⁶Acts 2. 38 ¹⁷Acts 8. 36

The tree of life

ALL FORMS OF life on this planet are part of a food chain in the ecosystem but the link which completes and secures the chain is plantlife. Take away plantlife and all life on earth would cease. Certainly, human beings depend for their continued existence on many elements of the vegetable kingdom—whether absorbed directly as food or indirectly as meat from animals whose growth was induced by eating plants or food manufactured from them. At the creation, God said to Adam and Eve:

'... See, I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree, whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.'



And with reference to the animal kingdom:

'Also to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.'¹

¹*Genesis 1, 29, 30 (NKJ) [Nelson]*

Later, the Psalmist was more brief, stating that God:

'...causes the grass to grow for the cattle. And vegetation for the service of man ...'²

LIGHT, WARMTH, FOOD AND WATER

There are nearly one and a quarter million species of plants: their continued existence depends on the availability of light, warmth, minerals and water. Green plants and trees convert carbon dioxide and water into sugars and starches, in the presence of the green coloured substance, chlorophyll. The process is called photosynthesis and the energy required for this to take place is light energy. Each leaf is positioned to gain maximum exposure to light. They also extract from the air immense quantities of carbon dioxide exhaled by humans and animals (preventing a lethal accumulation of carbon dioxide in the air) and also oxygen and hydrogen. Warmth from the sun stimulates growth provided the necessary nutrition is available from minerals and trace elements in the soil. These nutrients, however, can only be taken up by the roots of the plants in solution; water is vital in this respect and also to allow the cooling effect of transpiration from the leaves. Where there is adequate light, warmth, food and water healthy growth results.

PHOTOTROPISM

The upward growth of shoots depends on the strength of the light falling on them—a phenomenon called phototropism—and their direction is always towards the light.



²Psalm 104. 14 (NKJ) [Nelson]

The amount of light needed varies according to the natural habitat of each species. For example, pelargoniums (*geraniums*) from the open hillsides of South Africa need intense light even when cosseted in our glasshouses; marantas (*prayer plants*) in the dimness of tropical rainforests manage with low intensity light, which is why they tolerate being grown in a shady corner indoors.

DEATH AND DECAY

All plants and trees die eventually. Then they decay and return to the dust of the earth. So do human beings. The Bible does not mince matters when it says in a consistent message

'... All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades. Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it: Surely the people are grass.'³

'As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more.'⁴

'Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ... there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?'⁵

'... thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.'⁶

THE TREE OF LIFE

This was not always so. At the creation

'the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; *the tree of life* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.'⁷

Alas, Adam ignored God's clear command:

'... of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'⁸

Having eaten, Adam now had the knowledge to differentiate between good and evil and could have proceeded further to eat of the tree of life. In this he was forestalled:

'... He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever. So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden ...'⁹

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

But God is merciful; he provided a way of escape from the finality of death

³*Isaiah 40. 6, 7 (NKL) [Nelson]*

⁴*Psalm 103. 15, 16*

⁵*Job 14. 1, 2, 7-10*

⁶*Psalm 104. 29*

⁷*Genesis 2. 8, 9*

⁸*Genesis 2. 17*

⁹*Genesis 3. 22, 23 (NIV)*

which men and women have inherited from Adam. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed joyfully

'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord... Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist.'¹⁰

Yes, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born in the royal line of king David of Israel, the son of Jesse.

He lived a perfect life, gave himself as a sacrifice for the sins of men, was resurrected and made immortal and now sits on the right hand of God in heaven. And what a wonderful message he sends to you and to me:

'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life ...'¹¹

MEN AS TREES

Jesus invites us to become heirs to the kingdom that he will establish on this earth. We see the invitation in the Old Testament too where the prophet used trees in an analogy.

'Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. And whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river. And will not fear when heat comes; But her leaf will be green. And will not be anxious in the year of drought. Nor will cease from yielding fruit.'¹²

THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES



¹⁰Isaiah 11. 1-3, 5 (NIV)

¹¹Revelation 22. 14

¹²Jeremiah 17. 7, 8 (NKJ) [Nelson]

Jesus uses a vine in another analogy:

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing . . . Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.'¹³

FRUIT BEARING

Jesus offers us everything we need for sturdy growth and fruiting. He offers us LIGHT:

'I am the light of the world.'¹⁴

We can be stimulated by the WARMTH of his love:

'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.'¹⁵

He invites us to absorb complete NUTRITION:

'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.'¹⁶

He can provide that essential WATER:

'whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'¹⁷

If we are recognised by Jesus when he comes as having borne fruit then he will accept us into his kingdom. But, we must realise that this has to be an on-going process—continually trying to be like him and attempting to suppress the wrong promptings of our human nature. Jesus calls this *overcoming*:

'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'¹⁸

Isaiah the prophet gave a similar message:

'To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they might be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.'¹⁹

A REPLANTING

When Jesus returns, Paradise will be restored and the earth will be filled with peace and joy:

'And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.'²⁰

¹³John 15. 1, 4, 5, 8 ¹⁴John 8. 12 ¹⁵John 15. 9 ¹⁶John 6. 54 ¹⁷John 4. 14 ¹⁸Revelation 2. 7

¹⁹Isaiah 61. 3 (NKJ) [Nelson] ²⁰Isaiah 65. 21, 22

But first, Jesus warns us that we must act and become related to him by baptism before he comes back:

'Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things [the signs he gives—which are discussed in LIGHT regularly], know that it [the setting up of the kingdom of God on earth] is near, even at the doors.'²¹

Then, when he comes, Micah tells us:

'... he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.'²²

THE GLORIOUS PROSPECT

With Paradise restored, a glorious prospect for the earth is revealed: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.'²³

THE TREE OF LIFE

The vision of the future age which was given by Jesus in the book of Revelation contains some beautiful symbology. Because of sin in the beginning, man was banished from the Garden of Eden and prevented from having access to the tree of life. The future provides a very different view. All things will be renewed by the power of God. It is described as the new Jerusalem:

'In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the *tree of life*, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.'²⁴

But, please note also what that chapter has to say:

'He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.'²⁵

Don Smith
Bramerton

²¹Matthew 24. 32, 33 ²²Micah 4. 3, 4 ²³Amos 9. 13-15 ²⁴Revelation 22. 2 ²⁵Revelation 22. 20 (NIV)



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